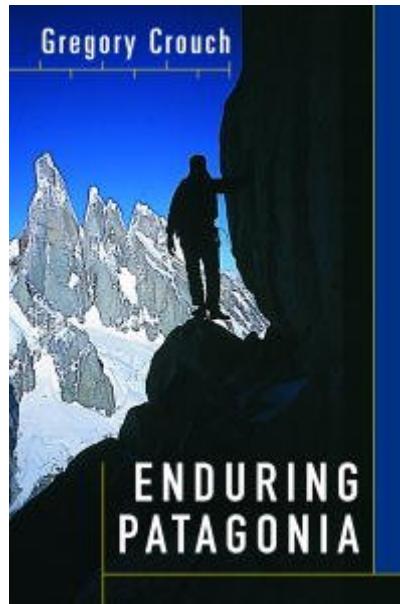


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Enduring Patagonia



Synopsis

Patagonia is a strange and terrifying place, a vast tract of land shared by Argentina and Chile where the violent weather spawned over the southern Pacific charges through the Andes with gale-force winds, roaring clouds, and stinging snow. Squarely athwart the latitudes known to sailors as the roaring forties and furious fifties, Patagonia is a land trapped between angry torrents of sea and sky, a place that has fascinated explorers and writers for centuries. Magellan discovered the strait that bears his name during the first circumnavigation. Charles Darwin traveled Patagonia's windy steppes and explored the fjords of Tierra del Fuego during the voyage of the Beagle. From the novel perspective of the cockpit, Antoine de Saint-Exupry immortalized the Andes in *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, and a half century later, Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia* earned a permanent place among the great works of travel literature. Yet even today, the Patagonian Andes remain mysterious and remote, a place where horrible storms and ruthless landscapes discourage all but the most devoted pilgrims from paying tribute to the daunting and dangerous peaks. Gregory Crouch is one such pilgrim. In seven expeditions to this windswept edge of the Southern Hemisphere, he has braved weather, gravity, fear, and doubt to try himself in the alpine crucible of Patagonia. Crouch has had several notable successes, including the first winter ascent of the legendary Cerro Torre's West Face, to go along with his many spectacular failures. In language both stirring and lyrical, he evokes the perils of every handhold, perils that illustrate the crucial balance between physical danger and mental agility that allows for the most important part of any climb, which is not reaching the summit, but getting down alive. Crouch reveals the flip side of cutting-edge alpinism: the stunning variety of menial labor one must often perform to afford the next expedition. From building sewer systems during a bitter Colorado winter to washing the plastic balls in McDonalds' playgrounds, Crouch's dedication to the alpine craft has seen him through as many low moments as high summits. He recounts, too, the riotous celebrations of successful climbs, the numbing boredom of forced encampments, and the quiet pride that comes from knowing that one has performed well and bravely, even in failure. Included are more than two dozen color photographs that capture the many moods of this land, from the sublime beauty of the mountains at sunrise to the unrelenting fury of its storms. *Enduring Patagonia* is a breathtaking odyssey through one of the world's last wild places, a land that requires great sacrifice but offers great rewards to those who dare to challenge it.

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Customer Reviews

I loved this book. I was inspired by the tenacity of Crouch and his climbing partners, the descriptions of Patagonia and of course his many climbs. This one is definitely a keeper and it wouldn't shock me if I read it again just for the pure enjoyment of being transported to parts south.

I like adventure and I enjoy reading about climbing and climbers in particular. I find that, in addition to the physical skills and mental toughness required to be an accomplished climber, I'm also inspired by climber's passion and total commitment to their craft. To be dedicated to something where you are willing to give all you have physically and mentally to accomplishing a goal has always been attractive to me. In this respect Crouch does not disappoint. I also enjoyed Crouch's honesty and humility when talking about his own abilities. This is a rare quality among climbing authors. This is a surprisingly well written book where the author is able to share with the reader, quite graphically, some of the physical and mental challenges a climber faces when climbing in such a remote part of the world.

Gregory Crouch is more than an adventure writer; he is a nature poet, chronicling his climbs in the Patagonian Andes--the near vertical faces of Cerro Torre, Fitzroy, Aguja Poincenot--fighting rock

and ice, snow and wind, fear and fatigue, while conquering the otherworldly mountains straddling Chile and Argentina. Crouch's team of climbers was the first to complete a winter ascent of Cerro Torre's notorious west face in winter, a mind-bending feat considering how often climbs end in failure and sometimes death. His passion for climbing began as a cadet at West Point, where he scaled the Shawangunk Mountains by the Hudson River in New York, and continued long after he left the military following the first Gulf War. He worked construction jobs before becoming a full-time writer, saving every cent and going back to the Patagonian range again and again, comparing his quest to Captain Ahab's obsession with the big white whale in *Moby Dick*. Crouch's book is full of ripe metaphor and imagery: "Cracks and booms heard in the howl of storm are comprehensible to me, but not the mumbled conversations, barking dogs, ringing church bells, and the toneless organ growl that I hear...the asymphonic chorus that will pipe us into hell." The game is survival, and those who do are the unsung heroes of climbing as in war: "True toughness sits quietly, like the dull luster of a worn pair of combat boots or a battered ice axe."

I'm reading this book for the second time because I enjoyed it so much. It's hard for me to relate to big money expeditions that the majority of climbing books present, but being near broke with a torn rucksack is right up my ally. The only other climbing writer that I constantly enjoy reading is Simon Yates. I would recommend this book to anyone looking for an honest, exciting read.

Couch does a great job of describing the atmosphere. I felt as if I were there while experiencing not only his climbs but his time waiting for weather to clear and hiking in Patagonia.

The best book on climbing, and life's choices, I've read this year. Highly recommended if you want to combine the inner exploration of what's possible with your life with an unconventional story arc on life's purpose and meaning. Gregory Crouch walked away from it all, went climbing, and ended up with so much more in return. We could all learn a lot from his experience. Book is notable for some of the best, highly detailed, humorous, and incredibly well written climbing stories along with what it really takes mentally and physically to climb some of the world's toughest peaks. Virtually every page is filled with climbing lore, philosophy, and hard core stories. When it's not, it's about the intrepid life of Gregory Crouch, who took an unconventional left turn on life's modern career path that has been amazingly fulfilling for him, and maybe less for most of us than we'd like to admit. About as good as it gets in climbing writing. Highly recommended.

This is a good book, but I'm not comfortable with the pain and frustration the author glories in. Why then, you ask, did I go to West Point as he did? That's a really good question! But, I'm glad I did and I'm glad Greg Crouch did, too. He's a better man than I. I admire his accomplishments while knowing that I would never attempt them myself. You will be impressed. Check it out.

This book is well written and is both interesting to the lay person and gripping to one who understands being in a life threatening climbing situation. I found myself having sweaty palms as I read along, wondering what was going to happen next. It explains what drives one to undertake such an extreme pastime in a thoughtful and honest way. I highly recommend it!

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